CAPTAIN GEORGE'S

Penny Dreadful

TORONTO, JUNE 26, 1981 NUMBER 644

"Manhandled"
DOROTHY LAMOUR · DAN DURYEA
ON THE SAME PROGRAM
"SMOKY MOUNTAIN MELODY"
ROY ACUFF and the SMOKY MOUNTAIN BOYS
victoria
12 NOON 30c TIL 1 P.M.

THAT NEW COMEDY SENSATION OF "A LETTER TO THREE WIVES".....
PAUL DOUGLAS
RAY MILLAND
JEAN PETERS
SECOND WEEK
IT HAPPENS EVERY SPRING
33c TIL 1 P.M. plus tax
SHEA'S

SECOND WEEK!
Humphrey BOGART
introducing JOHN DEREK
1949
KNOCK ON ANY DOOR
ADULT ENTERTAINMENT
DAILY 9.30 A.M.
IMPERIAL
33c TIL 1 P.M. plus tax

Clifton WEBB
as the hilarious Mr. Belvedere
and SHIRLEY TEMPLE
FIFTH BIG WEEK!
Mr. Belvedere Goes To College
UNIVERSITY
BLOOR ST. WEST NEAR BAY
UNIVERSITY NOON to 1 p.m. 33c plus tax
AT BOTH THEATRES EGLINTON
EGLINTON NEAR AVENUE ROAD
EGLINTON 1 P.M. to 2 p.m. 33c plus tax

RAY MILLAND
AUDREY TOTTER
THOMAS MITCHELL
"ALIAS Nick Beal"
TIVOLI
Extra
BURT LANCASTER
Kirk Douglas
Lizabeth Scott
"I WALK ALONE"
ADULT ENTERTAINMENT
12 NOON 30c TIL 1 P.M.

A WEEKLY REVIEW

DON MILLER

KLINTON SPILSBURY, THAT'S WHO: Now that The Legend of the Lone Ranger has come and, in most instances, departed without raising too big a cloud of dust, let us harken back to those frontier days -- of the Thirties and beyond -- when men were men and the best of the west could be found on the radio and in movie serials. Not that The Lone Ranger would win any awards for matchless dialogue or uplifting content. Fact is, it usually brought on the horse laugh in these quarters, and the horse wasn't Silver, either. Silver belonged to Buck Jones, not some masked man on the airwaves, and the whole idea of this guy with a domino riding around do-gooding all over the prairie was a bit more than could be swallowed without gagging -- several gags per show. However, the listening public loved it, and when Republic obtained the rights to make it into a chapter-play, so much the better.

Actually, the greatest moments on the Lone Ranger radio program came not from the exploits of the hero, or Tonto, or Silver, or the actors or writers. The big hero in this household was Alberto Colombo. Now Alberto Colombo was Republic's musical director at this time, and he scored most of the company's serials and Westerns. Colombo patched these background scores together from other Republic composers like Harry Grey and Hugo Riesenfeld, and from other non-Republic composers like the late Ludwig V. Beethoven. He also contributed some musical bridges of his own, as well as some cowboy ditties when the occasion called for them. Anyway, Colombo's scores were, in the parlance of the day, just swell, and more than one Republic nut grew older if not wiser without forgetting all this serial and Western music. To finally reach the point, somehow some of Colombo's Republic music reached the Lone Ranger radio shows, and they made perfect musical bridges between scenes. It was all too easy to overlook the particular Lone Ranger adventure at hand and just concentrate on hearing that stirring music from Zorro Rides Again and the Three Mesquiteers and Gene Autry saddle sagas once more.

Of all the Lone Ranger efforts, including radio, television and the later more expensive motion picture features, it would seem, without being unduly prejudiced, that Republic accomplished the job in the most entertaining manner. They produced two serials based on the radio characters, and the first one still stands out. Not so much for the Lone Ranger's daredeviltry, but for the way in which the serial setup was cleverly crafted. Switching the old serial gimmick of an unknown masked villain, instead there were five "unknown" heroes, one of whom would turn out to be the genuine Lone Ranger in the final chapter. The casting was ideal: Hal Taliaferro, formerly cowboy

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star Wally Wales; Lane Chandler, also a hero in independently made horse operas; young George Letz, a stuntman who would change his name to George Montgomery and go on to bigger if not better assignments; Herman Brix, who had already impersonated Tarzan on the screen and was a serial veteran after participating in some Olympic Games in 1928 and 1932, and would later become Bruce Bennett, a fine character actor; and Lee Powell, a relatively new face, who would thereafter be referred to as Lee "Lone Ranger" Powell in subsequent movie roles. The latter is a tipoff as to the identity of the Lone Ranger in the finale, but at this late date it isn't spilling any beans. Suffice to say, the story peg was to have each of these potential masked heroes killed off every few chapters until there was only one left. It was handled deftly, and when Republic trimmed the serial footage to produce a feature version, Hi-Yo Silver, running 69 minutes, the continuity was remarkably cohesive, a credit not only to Republic's editing department but to the way in which the original was constructed.

Second Republic serial was The Lone Ranger Rides Again, naturally, and it hit the screens about a year after the first one, in early 1939. This time Robert Livingstone played the Lone Ranger minus the subterfuge, and Chief Thundercloud, an admirable Tonto in the first serial, repeated the task. As followups are wont to do, The Lone Ranger Rides Again failed to attain the standards of the first, and represents the lowest ebb of the William Witney-John English directing stint on Republic chapter-plays. Which means of course that it was still well above the levels of serials turned out by Republic's two competitors at the time. Unlike Lee Powell, the Lone Ranger image didn't adhere to Livingston, who would return to the Three Mesquiteers Western series after performing leading roles in the studio's non-Western action product.

Dormant for years, The Lone Ranger reappeared on the screen -- the television screen -- when Jack Wrather picked up film rights and produced over 200 half-hour episodes, most of them starring Clayton Moore. For a brief while, John Hart played the role in between Moore's two tenures. As productions, they were not cause for rejoicing. In fact, they were pretty terrible, most of them. They're of interest today for the supporting casts, familiar faces who weren't so familiar at the time -- like James Arness, before Gunsmoke, playing of all things a dimwitted lawman. There were also some strange musical backgrounds, evidently pastiches of the old Alberto Colombo music, with a few notes changed and keys and tempos altered, but still recognizable. Moore to his credit did instill some heroism battling the slipshod productions, and Jay Silverheels was a stalwart Tonto.

Wrather also produced two considerably more lavish movie features with Moore and Silverheels. The Lone Ranger was okay, if routine, while The Lone Ranger and the Lost City of Gold was geared lower, but moved faster and seemed a more appropriate narrative.

There's also a book that tells you everything you'd want to know about The Lone Ranger, including the answer to the oft-asked question: Who Was That Masked Man?

PETE HARRIS

WE'RE HONORED: The Vast Whizzbang Organization was accorded a singular honor recently when it was chosen to lead off a review of Raiders of the Lost Ark in a major Canadian daily newspaper. The review, written by Michael Walsh, appeared in the Vancouver Province on Sunday, June 14, and began as follows:

"The Vast Whizzbang Organization will give thanks. For years, Captain George Henderson, Pete Harris and the three Dons -- Daynard, Miller and Hutchison -- have kept the faith.

"From their base of operations deep beneath Toronto's Memory Lane nostalgia shop, they have turned out 643 issues of Captain George's Penny Dreadful, a weekly newsletter dedicated to the pulp tradition in the mass media. For years. Whizzbangers have had but one prayer: Oh, that those thrilling days of yesteryear should come again!

"Their memories are magical, their tastes eclectic. Movies and magazines, radio, books and comic strips are all part of a past full of innocence, energy and youthful enthusiasm, beloved artifacts that Captain George poetically calls 'the toys of the dead.'

"But wait. The age of miracles is not past. Faith is still rewarded and prayers are answered.

"Yesteryear lives. Raiders of the Lost Ark is the perfect Saturday afternoon at the movies -- action and adventure not as it was, but as it should have been ..."

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STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: This business of movie copyrights has always been confusing, what with this company owning TV rights while that company retains theatrical rights, but the videotape boom is making it downright perplexing. For example, a couple of Marx Brothers movies -- Duck Soup and Animal Crackers -- are available on prerecorded cassette. Both were originally produced by Paramount, and, in fact, both still have the opening Paramount logo. So who's responsible for bringing out the cassettes? MCA, parent company of Universal. More recently, a series of Sherlock Holmes video cassettes was launched with a double bill of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, a 1939 20th Century-Fox film, and Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror, a 1942 Universal production, combined on one cassette. And what company is producing the series on cassette? MGM/CBS Home Video. On top of all that, the box in which the Holmes cassette comes also bears, with no explanation, the logo of Lorimar, a TV production company. Incidentally, the box, which features a painting of Basil Rathbone in profile, wearing the famous deerstalker hat and smoking a pipe, is one of the handsomest I've ever seen in the home videotape line.